



SUCCESS STORY

PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT OFFICE

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Contact: Joseph McDevitt (215)580-2708

Internet Address: www.sba.gov/pa/phil

Entrepreneur Gets a Little Help, Gives a Little Help

Prior to 1996, John Pergentile had a successful, 30-year career working in sales, distribution, and warehousing logistics within the packaging industry. With his knowledge of the packaging industry John established Sole Source Inc. located in Coatesville, Chester County. Sole Source Inc. provides packaging, shipping and office supplies as well as IT and telecommunications hardware and software to businesses throughout the country.

Soon after starting his company, John had a stroke, leaving him partially paralyzed on his left side. When John went on sales calls, he found that some clients were uncomfortable dealing with him because he was in a wheelchair. Some former clients would not even take his calls. He also found that some clients' buildings were not wheelchair-accessible.

Many would have given up, but John persevered. He recognized an opportunity to grow [Sole Source](#) by pursuing government contracts.

To do so, John investigated classifying Sole Source as an "8a" business - a business operated by someone with a disability or from an economically disadvantaged group. John knew that obtaining "8a" status could help him in the area of government contracts, where regulators require non-discriminatory practices toward contractors.

For assistance in filing for "8a" status, John turned to Jim Sinz, the government marketing specialist at the [Lehigh University SBDC](#). Although "8a" status can assist a business in obtaining government contracts, obtaining this certification is not a simple process. With Jim's help, over the course of a year all of the necessary paperwork was completed and, and Sole Source gained "8a" status.

Registering as a disadvantaged business was only the first step. Now John needed to use that status to obtain contracts. [Sole Source](#) became connected to the government contracts marketplace with Jim's help. He helped the company take advantage of the SBDC's computerized bid matching program, which notified them of contracts being offered. John also attended trade shows to make new business contacts.

Since obtaining "8a" status, the company's business has grown steadily. The company has garnered contracts to provide packaging supplies and warehousing and distribution management services to large companies throughout the region.

Sole Source's "8a" status has been valuable, but, as Jim Sinz notes, that status can only go so far: "[John and his team at Sole Source] just never quit. They demanded that we work hard for them and they work equally hard. They really made sure the '8a' certification paid off for them."

Recently, [Sole Source](#) expanded its business into a new area: managing computer refurbishing, disposal, and "buyback" programs for large companies. They won a contract from a large company to provide this service for tens of thousands of machines.

[Sole Source](#) established facilities for the new business in the Coatesville HUB Zone. The federal government established HUB Zones to promote economic growth in areas that have fallen on difficult times in growth and job creation. By locating his business in this area, Sole Source provides jobs in a community that truly needs them.

John has said that "Sole Source is committed to hiring residents of the HUB Zone and training them for the computer refurbishing venture. In doing so, [Sole Source](#) now will be able to help others who may not have gotten a chance to succeed in the business world."